

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

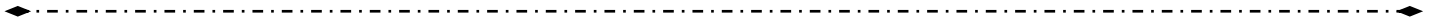
Meeting Date: November 7, 2017

Agenda Item: Elk Island Wildlife Management Area Addition

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 Min



Background:

The Fish and Wildlife Commission endorsed a conservation easement (CE) proposal in April 2016 to conserve approximately 140 acres along the north side of Wolf Island. The southern portion of the island is managed as part Elk Island Wildlife Management Area (WMA). After further analysis and work with the private landowner, a joint decision was made to instead propose fee title purchase of the private portion of the island, which would also include associated accreted lands. Under this revised proposal, all of Wolf Island in Section 23 would become part of the WMA. A portion of Wolf Island (in Section 26) is owned by the BLM and also managed by FWP as part of the WMA.

This proposed addition to Elk Island WMA is made up entirely of Yellowstone River riparian habitat, which is very productive for white-tailed deer, turkeys, pheasants, and many non-game species of wildlife. The WMA is a very popular area for hunting, fishing and other forms of wildlife-related recreation.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

FWP Region 7 would implement a public involvement process under the Montana Environment Policy Act (MEPA) and subsequently make a recommendation to the Commission, pending the outcomes of negotiations with the seller and appraisals.

Alternatives and Analysis:

No action is the only viable alternative to this proposal, which would leave this portion of Wolf Island in private ownership. The current landowners have been very good to work with, but there remains the potential for future conflicts related to changes in land use as ownership changes and the likelihood of trespass onto the private parcel by recreationists.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale:

FWP recommends Commission endorsement. This acquisition would ensure productive riparian habitat is conserved and available for public use while enhancing the integrity of the WMA.

Proposed Motion:

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission endorse the Elk Island Wildlife Management Area addition, allowing FWP to conduct additional analysis and associated public review.